



Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Children's Services Directorate

A

BARNSLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FORUM HELD ON TUESDAY 12th DECEMBER 2023

PRESENT

Headteacher and Board Representatives

Andy Barnett, Paul Crook, Victoria Gorton, Jonny Mitchell, Simon Tabbner and Joe Woffinden

Governor Representative(s)

Margaret Gostelow, Sandra James and Michael Sanderson

Nursery Provision Representative

Simon Sykes

Early Years Representative

Claire Gilmore

Further Education and 14 – 19 Years Provision Representative

Neil Wilkinson

Special and Alternative Provision Representatives

Molly Beever and Josh Greaves

Officers

Nina Sleight

Service Director (Education, Early Start and Prevention)

Josh Amahwe

Strategic Finance Manager (Core Services Directorate) Barnsley MBC

Peter Clark

Head of Registration and Elections, Barnsley MBC

Sue Day	Head of SEND and Education Inclusion, Barnsley MBC
Peter Mirfin	Governance Manager, Barnsley MBC
Helen Perrin	Principal Accountant, Barnsley MBC
Anna Turner	Head of Education and Partnerships, Barnsley MBC
Shafeek Khan	Secretary to the Barnsley Schools Forum

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Formal apologies were submitted by Mrs Lockwood, Mr Morgan, Councillor Moyes and Mrs Rooney.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Representatives from the Forum declared their interest in relation to matters being considered particularly as part of agenda items 4 and 5 of today's meeting.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

The minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 17th October 2023 were approved as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

No matters arose during consideration of these minutes.

5. REPORTS

Term-Time Only Pay Claim

Ms Pantry and Mr Nuttall presented a report which referred to employment tribunal proceedings brought by UNISON against both the Local Authority and maintained schools which claimed that term-time employees had been detrimentally treated due to the method by which their annual leave was calculated in comparison to full-time employees.

The Council's Cabinet had now approved an agreed settlement to the claim in which the revised calculation of annual leave entitlements would result in an uplift in the current rate of pay to term-time employees backdated to 1st September 2023. Under this arrangement, the Council undertook to meet the historic liabilities concerning the claim which would be paid by the end of this financial year whilst schools would have to incorporate the uplift in their budgets from September 2023 onwards. Schools had been notified of the notional impact of the uplift upon their budget.

Discussion arose on the implications and risks resulting from settlement of the claim, including the potential for additional, similar claims emerging from the GMB and Unite trade unions, together with the collective approach which the Council would adopt in relation to negotiations.

RESOLVED:

That the Schools Forum notes the outcome of the term-time claim, including the impact upon school budgets.

Review of the School Admissions Appeals Service

Mr Mirfin presented a report on the outcomes of a recent review of the policy and procedure for considering school admission appeals, including the service level agreement with schools. Mr Mirfin outlined the context of the review, particularly the rising number, scale and complexity of school appeals, together with the objective of ensuring a fair, equitable and transparent service which meets the needs of all schools as well as recognising the financial pressures facing the Local Authority in the medium term.

As a result, the report recommended the following proposals:

- That funding for school appeals is contained in the budgets of all schools in the Borough.
- The cost of appeals be increased from 42 pence per pupil to 44 pence and that the cost of hearing an appeal be increased from £354 per half-day to £432.
- Operational responsibility for managing the policy and procedure be transferred to the Local Authority's Governance Service, with effect from the beginning of the next academic year.

RESOLVED:

- **The Schools' Forum notes the recommendations concerning school admission appeals, following the recent review.**

Outcome of the Local Authority's Consultation with Schools on Proposed Changes to the Local Schools Funding Formula

Mr Amahwe presented his report on the outcomes of the Local Authority's consultation with schools on proposed changes to the local schools funding formula aimed at ensuring its closer alignment with the National Funding Formula (NFF) for Schools. The consultation sought views on changes to, firstly, the Free School Meals (FSM) and secondly, the split-site funding factors for schools with multiple sites, together with subsequent changes including unit values and weightings used in the Formula.

A total of 37 out of 88 schools in the Borough responded to the consultation and this equated to a 42% response rate which had improved in comparison to the previous year. Mr Amahwe then detailed the responses of schools to the consultation, as follows:

	No. of schools	No. of Responses	% responses
Secondary	11	5	45%
Primary	77	32	42%
Total	88	37	42%

The number and percentage of responses to the consultation were adjusted to take account of multiple and identical responses from Multi Academy Trusts (MAT) or school clusters. In such cases these responses were counted in terms of the number of schools within the cluster or MAT.

Question 1: Do you support the phased approach to aligning the FSM unit value to the NFF?

	Primary	Secondary	Total	Percentage
Agree	30	5	35	95%
Disagree	2	0	2	5%
Not sure	0	0	0	0%
Not answered	0	0	0	0%
	32	5	37	100%

A significant majority of respondents (95%) agreed with the proposal for a phased approach to aligning the FSM unit value to the NFF. Those respondents who disagreed believed the FSM rate should be in line with the NFF value in during 2024/25.

Question 2: Do you support the approach to fully align split- site funding values to the NFF Values?

	Primary	Secondary	Total	Percentage
Agree	32	5	37	100%
Disagree	0	0	0	0%
Not sure	0	0	0	0%
Not answered	0	0	0	0%
	32	5	37	100%

This funding factor value had been introduced in 2023/24, with a value set in line with the Department for Education consultation which proposed that this factor should be added to the NFF during 2024/25. This factor was now part of the NFF with a value higher than previously proposed. Only two schools in Barnsley would benefit from this funding factor, however, all respondents to the consultation agreed with the proposal to fully align the split-site funding factor values to the NFF.

Next Steps

Barnsley MBC's response to the outcomes of the consultation, would include the following proposed changes:

- To increase the FSM proxy indicator (introduced in 2022-23), to ensure further alignment to the NFF and meet the requirement to move factor values at least 10% closer to the NFF. This will increase the FSM proxy indicator unit value to £258 (dependent on affordability) per FSM pupil compared to the NFF value of £490. Increases will continue to be implemented in future years to ensure a phased approach to full NFF alignment.

- To fully align the split-site factor in line with the compulsory national formulaic approach and NFF funding values, with the effect that the lump sum for basic eligibility will be £53,700 and the maximum distance funding will be £26,900.

RESOLVED:

- **The Schools' Forum notes the comments from schools on proposed changes to the local funding formula for schools, together with the Local Authority's response and indicative position concerning the FSM and split-site funding factors.**

Proposal to Transfer One Per Cent of the Schools Block Budget to the High Needs Block

Ms Sleight and Mr Amahwe presented a report which focused upon the third key issue within the consultation on proposed changes to the local funding formula, namely the proposed percentage transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block to address both demand and cost pressures.

Ms Sleight and Mr Amahwe detailed the context for the proposed transfer of 1% or £1.9 million. The challenges, indicated, were reflective of the situation facing the SEND system nationally and in Barnsley, these were being addressed primarily through the Local SEND Improvement Plan, DSG Management Plan and the SEND 'Safety-Valve' Participation Programme. An overriding consideration was that one of the conditions set out in this programme was to ensure a 1% transfer of funding to the High Needs Block (HNB) as part of ensuring expenditure in the HNB was in a sustainable position by 2026/27.

Ms Sleight and Mr Amahwe went on to analyse the responses to the proposal, detailed as follows:

Question 3: Do you support the proposal to transfer 1% from the schools' block to the high needs block for 2024/25 and for this to be applied to meet the cost of placing SEND pupils in newly commissioned local SEND places?

	Primary	Secondary	Total	Percentage
Agree	21	3	24	65%
Disagree	11	2	13	35%
Not sure	0	0	0	0%
Not answered	0	0	0	0%
	32	5	37	100%

Mr Amahwe indicated that more than half of the responses from schools (65%) were supportive of the proposal, including 3 of the 5 secondary schools which commented. However, a significant minority of respondents indicated that they could not support the proposal and the impact of inflationary pressures on school budgets was a common reason. It was also noted that schools would welcome an opportunity to provide co-produced solutions in best meeting the needs of children with SEND.

Notice of Motion

Having considered the outcomes of this part of the consultation it was moved by Mr. Sanderson and seconded by Mr. Greaves that a vote be undertaken to establish whether the Schools' Forum supported the proposal in this report. Of members of the Schools Group eligible to vote in this matter, one voted against the proposal and there were no abstentions. Therefore, the motion was carried.

RESOLVED:

- **Following detailed consideration of the analysis of responses to this question in the consultation, together with the requirements and conditions of the DSG Management Plan and 'Safety Valve' agreement with the Department for Education and further to today's vote, the Schools' Forum approves the proposal to transfer 1% of funding, equating to £1.9 million, from the Schools Block Budget to the High Needs Block during 2024/25.**

Schools Forum Forward Plan (2023/2024)

Mr Khan presented the Forum's proposed forward programme for 2023/2024 with particular attention to the matters scheduled for consideration at the next meeting, on 16th January.

- **That the Forum notes the Forward Plan.**

6. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

No issues were raised at today's meeting. The Chair of the Forum concluded business and thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution.

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(Signed by the Chair of the Barnsley Schools Forum)